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Miraculous Cure of W. White

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**FROM THE BEQUEST OF
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RELATIVE TO THE

MIRACULOUS CURE

WINEFRID WHITE,

OF WOLVERHAMPTON,

AT ST. WINEFRID'S WELL,

Alias **HOLYWELL, in FLINTSHIRE,**

On the 28th of JUNE 1805:

With Observations thereon,

By the R. R. J— M—, D. D. V. A.

P. S. A. Lond. and C. Acad. Rome.

It is good to hide the secrets of the King: but it is irreparable to reveal and confess the works of God. Tobias c. xiv. v. 7.

THIRD EDITION.

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1806.

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Should any other person object to the publication of these facts and reasonings (which are presumed to be equally incontrovertible) the Author replies;—That they are highly curious to the Naturalist, instructive to the Theologian, and important to the Christian. They decide that weighty question which was so long and so warmly contested amongst the learned half a century ago, and clearly point out that body of Christians, amongst the rival communions, which the Divine Founder of Christianity sanctions.

"If I do not perform the works of my Father, do not believe me."—*St. John, c. x. ver. 37.*

May 1, 1806.

AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS, &c.

HAVING been informed from Wolverhampton, whilst I was engaged in my ministerial duties in Suffolk, by persons of judgment and veracity, that an unquestionable miracle had lately been wrought on a person residing in that town, and finding afterwards that the report of this event, which had soon become widely spread, gave rise to an infinite number of inquiries, speculations and debates, I conceived it to be my duty, in conformity with the directions of the Church, in her last general council*, to enter into a detailed and regular investigation of the matter, and to make the particulars of this investigation publicly known.

Upon my return therefore into Staffordshire, I judged it proper, in the first place, to see and interrogate the person who was the subject of the reported miracle: I found her to be a young woman, aged twenty-six years, by name Winefrid White, of evident good sense and modesty, and to whose strict morality and unaffected piety all her acquaintances bore ample testimony. She has resided, for more than ten years with a respectable shopkeeper

* "Statuit Sancta Synodus—nulla admittenda esse nova miracula, nisi recognoscente et approbante Episcopo, qui, simul atque de his aliquid compertum habuerit, adhibitis in consilium Theologis, et aliis viris piis, ea faciat quæ veritati et pietati consentanea judicaverit."—Concil. Trid. Sess. xxv. de Invoc. SS.

in Salop-street, Wolverhampton, a Mrs. Withenbery, first in the quality of a servant, namely, as long as she was able to do the work of one, but latterly as an inmate, being supported by the profits of a small school for the instruction of young children and the benefactions of Mrs. Withenbery and her other friends. The following is the declaration of this young person, as I took it down from her lips in writing.

Winefrid White being interrogated by me concerning her late disorder, and the cure of it, solemnly declares on her word, and is willing, if necessary, to confirm by her oath, that she had been for several years in a very infirm state of health, owing to an internal disorder, and that for the last three years and more, previously to her going to Holywell, she had been utterly incapable of doing her work as a servant. She says that the first signal effect of her disorder was a violent pain in her left side, which afterwards extended itself to the left hip, and to the back bone. She describes the said hip with the left leg, as seeming to fall out of its place, in consequence of the stretching of the sinews belonging to it; so that when she attempted to move, she was forced to drag the leg after her. She says that the back bone was frequently swelled, particularly in the upper and lower parts of it, to relieve which, sometimes blisters and at other times poultices were applied. These occasioned a great discharge of matter, as did also two issues which were made in her back, one on each side of the bone, and kept open for several months. She says the pain in the back bone and thence up to her head was most violent; and, during the last year and a half of her malady, uninterrupted; so that she was under the greatest apprehension of losing her senses, and frequently prayed to God that this misfortune might not befall her. Sometimes, when she was a little better, she could walk with the help of a stick, or even for

a short time, without one; but she was never free from the violent pain and weakness above described. At other times she was unable to move herself at all, and was accordingly carried to and from bed, like a new-born infant. Once she continued in this state of universal debility for six weeks together: still the principal seat of her pain, she says, was the back bone and the left side. After recovering a little from the last mentioned severe fit, she began to use a crutch, with which she supported herself, and dragged on her left leg, using it under the corresponding arm. But this arm soon failing, and becoming too weak to hold a crutch, or sometimes even a handkerchief, or to be raised by her to her head, she was forced to hobble on (when she could move herself at all) with the crutch under her right arm, and thus drag on her whole left side as if it had been dead.

In this helpless and hopeless situation (for she had frequently heard Dr. Underhill and Mr. Stubbs declare that medicines could do her no good, and that her disorder was incurable) she thought of applying to Almighty God for supernatural relief; and as she had read and heard of many miraculous cures that had been performed by his power and goodness, at Holywell, in Flintshire, through the prayers of the blessed Virgin Mary and St. Winefrid, she felt a strong inclination to get herself conveyed thither. But, on the other hand, being apprehensive of getting rid of a cross which might be intended for her sanctification and salvation, she says she determined not to do, nor even to wish for any thing regarding this matter, but in conformity with the advice of her spiritual directors. She therefore, first applied for counsel to the Rev. Mr. Walsh, and afterwards, at his desire, to the Rev. Mr. Blount, who having inquired into the motives that induced her to wish for a cure of her malady, approved of them, and consented to her undertaking the journey. She therefore set off for Holywell, as soon afterwards

as she could get herself ready, with an humble confidence that God was both able and willing to work a miracle in her behalf, as well as he had done in favour of so many others. This confidence, she says, she expressed to some of her friends before she set off. She left Wolverhampton on the 25th of June by the Shrewsbury stage coach, and reached Chester by another stage coach on the evening of the following day; whence she got an immediate conveyance to Holywell by a return-post chaise belonging to Mr. Price of the White Horse in the said town, arriving there very early on the ensuing morning. She says she suffered extremely during the journey and upon her arrival at Holywell; so that she began to apprehend the fears which her mistress had expressed of her not returning home alive, would prove to be true.

The next morning, the 28th of June, about seven o'clock, having performed those daily acts of devotion which she had constantly performed ever since she had formed the first design of visiting Holywell, she left her lodging, which was situated at the house of a Mrs. Humphreys in Well Street, and with the utmost difficulty crawled down to what is called St. Winefrid's Well*,

* St. Winefrid is recorded in the English and Roman Martyrologies as a virgin and martyr of the ancient British or Welsh nation, who appears to have lived soon after the conversion of our Saxon ancestors in the seventh century. Thus much may be pronounced of her history with certainty. The other circumstances related of her; viz. that she was beheaded by Cardoc, a Prince of North Wales, because she refused to gratify his unlawful desires, and that the fountain, which bears her name, sprung up on the spot to which her head rolled from the adjoining mountain, with the other wonderful particulars recorded in her legend, rest chiefly on the authority of Robert, who was Abbot of Shrewsbury, and who collected the same, from Welsh manuscripts, in the early part of the 12th century. Whatever may be thought of this legend in other respects, we have certain proofs from it that the well itself was visited, at that remote period, as it has been ever since, by persons who sought the cure of their various disorders there; in the same man-

in company with a Mrs. Midghall and the two Mrs. Bromleys, ladies who had arrived from Liverpool at Holywell the same day that she did. One of the latter, she

ner as the Jews did, in the time of our Saviour, at the pool in Jerusalem, called Bethsaida, John v. 4.; likewise that the stones in this well were many of them streaked with red, like blood, and that the moss growing round it exhaled a remarkable odoriferous scent, as is still the case.—See an abridgement of the Legend in Cressy's Church History, Book xvi.—Independantly of these circumstances, St. Winefrid's Well is remarkable for the astonishing force and quantity of water which it constantly and invariably shoots forth; some writers say at the rate of 26, some of more than 100 tons every minute. It is surrounded and covered in by an edifice in the richest style of the pointed order; such as prevailed in the reign of Henry VII., by whose mother, the pious Countess of Richmond, it was built. It consists of light cluster-pillars and mouldings, which support the most gorgeous tracery work and groining; the whole being ornamented with sculptured bosses, pendant capitals, fret-work niches and tabernacles. The form of the edifice is quadrangular, but, round the bason of the fountain, it diverges into an octagon. Over the well is a chapel of the same date and style with it, which is now turned into a school. Upon the neighbouring cliffs stand the beautiful ruins of Basingwerk, now called Greenfield Abbey. The whole scenery of this interesting spot must have been at once beautiful and sublime in the extreme, before it was broken and polluted by modern manufactories, dwelling-houses, and wash-houses. Ranulphus Higden, a monk of St. Werburg's Abbey, now the cathedral at Chester, who flourished in the middle of the 14th century, finishes his account of the Wonderful Things of Wales, *De Mirabilibus Terre Wallie*, with the following description of St. Winefrid's Well:

Ad Basingwerk fons oritur,
 Qui satis vulgo dicitur,
 Et tantis bullis scaturit
 Quod mox injecta rejicit.
 Tam magnum flumen procreat
 Ut Cambriæ sufficiat.
 Egri qui dant rogamina,
 Reportant medicamina.
 Rubro guttatos lapides
 In scatebris reperies;

says, was so charitable as to assist her in bathing. She describes the effect of the water, upon her being immersed in it, as so much surprising and overpowering her, that she was unable to recollect herself, or attend to the state of her health, till she began to change her bathing dress in the adjoining cabin, belonging to a Mrs. Needham who attends at the well, when she found herself able to stand upon her left leg as firmly as upon her right leg, and that the excruciating pains in her back, and her other pains and maladies had quite left her; in a word, that she was in every respect perfectly well. She says, that remaining a fortnight longer at Holywell, she bathed two or three times more, in compliance with custom and to satisfy the importunity of her friends, but without any sensible benefit to her health, as, in fact, she was perfectly cured at her first bathing, and enabled to walk, run, or work as well as ever. From Holywell she went to Puddington, in Cheshire, where she had an acquaintance, and from thence to Chester, where she was detained several days by her friends, so that it was about a month from the time of her cure till her reaching home. She adds, that she has never had any return of her former disorders, pains or weakness, since the day of her cure, viz. the 28th day of June last.

This declaration having been read over to the undersigned, she hereby testifies the truth of it.

WINEFRID WHITE.

In signum sacri sanguinis
Quem Wenefredas virginis
Guttur truncatum fuderat, &c.

See Ran. Higd. Polychron apud XV. Scriptores Th. Gale.

N. B. The devotion of the English Saxons and of the Church in general, as appears by the different Martyrologies, to St. Winefrid, St. David, St. Malo, and the Welsh Saints in general, independently of other arguments, confutes the pretensions of those who say that the ancient British nation was not heretofore in communion with the Roman See, but of a different religion from hers.

N. B. There is now an interval of four months* since Winefrid White recovered her health, during all which time she has continued well, active and strong. She has walked six miles at a time, more than once, without the least fatigue, and carried half a hundred weight on her left side. Her left arm, which she says, during her illness, was an inch and a half less in circumference than the other, is now of the same thickness with it.

With this declaration before me, it was natural to wish, in the first place, for the opinion of the medical gentlemen who are mentioned in it. The physician, Dr. Underhill, had removed his residence since about Christmas last, from the neighbourhood of Wolverhampton to Manchester, and therefore the communication with him was unavoidably a matter of some delay. But Mr. Stubbs, an eminent surgeon, was, and is still resident at Wolverhampton. I therefore lost no time in applying to him for an account of this case, with which he very obligingly furnished me, as follows:

“I the undersigned, having for several years attended the family of Mrs. Withenbery, of this town, in my professional line, and being now called upon to declare what I have observed and know, concerning the past and present state of health of Winefrid White, a servant in the said family, now aged 26 years, do hereby certify as follows:

“I first visited the aforesaid Winefrid White, as appears by my day-book, Sept. 1, 1802; at which time, as well as afterwards, I found her in a very debilitated and lan-

* At the time of giving this second edition of the present work near a twelve month has elapsed since the cure took place, during all which time she has remained perfectly free from all her former maladies. On some occasions she has walked as many as 13 miles at a time.

guishing state, owing to an internal disorder, accompanied with the most fatal symptoms. These brought on an enlargement of the vertebræ, with a relaxation of the ligaments, and a paralytic affection, particularly of the left side; so that, at length, the patient could not hold herself upright, nor move herself from place to place, except in the most feeble manner, and by help of a crutch, placed under her right arm. In attempting to afford her relief I administered to her, from time to time, every remedy that Dr. Underhill, then of Tettènhall, who occasionally visited her, prescribed, or that seemed to myself calculated for this purpose; and, in particular, to relieve the aforesaid enlargement of the vertebræ, I, with the advice of the said Doctor, cut an issue on each side of it,* which issues were kept open for several months. But all this proved ineffectual, and, to speak the truth, I considered her case as incurable, and that her dissolution could not be far distant. My last professional visit to her was on the 14th of August, 1804; but I have frequently seen her and conversed with her since, without discovering any change in her for the better, down to the 22d or 23d of last June; being two or three days before she is reported to have made a journey to Holywell, in Flintshire.—At the latter end of the ensuing month, viz. July, she being then returned from her journey, I met her in the streets, to my utter astonishment, walking with as much firmness, vigour and agility as any other young person of her age. All the above mentioned fatal symptoms, as she declares, and I have reason to believe, have disappeared. The ligaments of the vertebræ are contracted and firm, as I ascertained

* Mr. Stubbs acknowledges that he considered this patient's case to belong to that species of *palsy arising from a curvature of the spine*; which is treated of by the learned Percival Pott, in vol. iii. p. 353. of his *chirurgical works*. He accordingly treated it in the manner recommended by that eminent practitioner.

yesterday, though a certain small enlargement of them is discernible, being rather a mark of her past weakness, than any present inconvenience; she holding herself perfectly erect, and moving, in every respect, with the vigour and activity of perfect health. These changes so extraordinary, compleat, and performed in so short a time, I am unable to account for, by any principle of medicine I am acquainted with, or by any experience I have had in it.

SAML. STUBBS, Surgeon."

Wolverhampton, Sept. 11, 1805.

As amongst the many persons at Wolverhampton who had been acquainted with W. White, it appeared evident there were none, after Mr. Stubbs, so well qualified to give an account of her health, previously to her journey and afterwards, as those with whom she has resided for so many years, and with whom she still continues to reside, I therefore next applied for information on these heads to Mrs. and Miss Withenbery, which they gave me by word of mouth, to the following purport, and afterwards committed to writing, in these terms:

" Hon. Sir,

I beg leave to inform you that Winefrid White has lived with me this ten years. She was attacked with an inward complaint about three years ago that rendered her incapable of doing her work, or assisting herself. She at different times was reduced to the greatest extremity, and on some occasions was so bad that Dr. Stubbs would not permit her to be removed from one room to another, fearing that her life would be endangered by so slight a motion. During the three years, she received the last sacraments of the church five different times. She received every assistance that medicine and care could afford, both from Dr. Underhill, a physician, and Mr. Stubbs, without any essential benefit. Finding her grow worse, and continually

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weaker, Dr. Underhill and Mr. Stubbs, by whom she was attended, assured me, the former about Christmas last, the latter about Easter, that her case was incurable, and that she must be content to drag on a painful life. During the last year she nearly lost the use of her left side, and could only walk a little with the assistance of a crutch.

Finding every medical assistance ineffectual, she declared to me, the beginning of June last, her wish to visit St. Winefrid's well, for the purpose of obtaining relief for her disorder. I gave my consent to the trial, though with the greatest apprehensions she would not be able to bear the fatigue of the journey, or ever return home alive, knowing her extreme weakness. I put in her pocket a note certifying who she was, and from whence she came, if in case any accident might occur, that notice might be given me of it. She accordingly left Wolverhampton for Chester, the 23th of June last. On the 4th or 5th of July I received a letter from a person whom Winefrid had employed to write for her, informing me she had recovered the use of her limbs, and was perfectly cured. She returned to Wolverhampton, after having stopped at Chester and other places, where she had business or acquaintance, towards the end of July, perfectly cured of all her previous dreadful complaints, erect, strong and active, able to walk or run, and raise a heavy weight with that left hand, which before she was not able to hold her crutch with. She has continued in that state down to the present date, as witness my hand,

W. WITHEMBERY."

W. Hampton, Sep. 13, 1806.

"I, daughter to the aforesaid W. Withembury, am enabled to testify, and do hereby testify the truth of the aforesaid particulars.

W. WITHEMBERY, Jun."

To the R. R. Dr. M.

A few days after receiving the above testimony, having business in Lancashire, I waited upon Dr. Underhill, at Manchester, for the purpose of procuring his account of Winefrid's health, during the time that he attended her, which he very obligingly drew up as follows, and sent to my lodging.

" Dear Sir,

I sit down to give you some short account of Winefrid White's case, which I shall endeavour to do in the plainest manner I can. I had frequently an opportunity of seeing her during the space of two or three years, and oftentimes when she appeared to be in the most distressed situation, sometimes incapable of moving herself in any direction. At one time she was deprived of the use of the lower extremities, at another her arms were motionless*. The functions of the stomach and alimentary canals were equally irregular. I remember when her appetite was quite sufficient, and again when it totally failed her. Her voice at times scarcely audible. Her pulse, though very weak, I think, seldom indicated her dissolution to be at hand†. I never could attribute her complaint to any distinct species: though I believe, it belonged to the nervous class. From the seemingly paralytic disposition of the constitution, I at one time apprehended that the disorder might

* It appears from the testimony of the patient herself, as well as from that of Mrs. and Miss Withenbery, that she never was totally deprived of the use of her right leg and arm, except when her whole body was rendered quite motionless by a general palsy. Her ordinary debility consisted in a hemiplegia, depriving her of the use of her left side.

† The Doctor does not here deny that *sometimes* she appeared to be at the point of death. In fact the aforesaid Mrs. and Miss Withenbery assert that, on one occasion at least, he ordered her lips to be moistened with spirits, by means of a feather, as in the case of dying persons, and that the ensuing morning he called upon Mrs. Withenbery, to ask her how she herself was in health, saying he *supposed there was no occasion of enquiring after poor Winefrid White.*

arise from a diseased spine, and, in consequence, an issue was, I believe, made on each side of what appeared to be an enlargement of the vertebræ. But these had no effect. The variety of medicines administered is too great to recollect; but they were equally ineffectual; and at length, tired out with unavailing attempts, I deemed her case to be totally incurable. This happened about last Christmas.

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN UNDERHILL."

Manchester, 18th Sept. 1805.

The R. R. Dr. M.

Returning out of Lancashire, I took Liverpool in my way, being extremely desirous of finding out and interrogating the three persons from thence, whom the young woman professed to have met with at Holywell, and to have been actually with her at the time of her cure. By the kindness and industry of my friends, I was fortunate enough to find them all out, and to have an interview with them during the short time I remained in that town; when they respectively made to me, by word of mouth, before witnesses, and afterwards signed the following declarations.

Liverpool, Sept. 27, 1805.

"I the undersigned declare, that having made a journey to Holywell with a little boy, a step-son of mine, I there, on the 27th of June last, met with a young woman from Wolverhampton, of the name of Winefrid White, who went there in hopes of obtaining the cure of a weakness, which deprived her of the use of one side of her body, and that lodging at the same house with her, I observed she could not so much as go across the room without the help of a crutch, under the arm on the opposite side. On the following morning, June 28th, I accompanied her down to the Well, together with the little boy and the two Mrs. Bromleys. She had a great deal of dif-

ficulty in getting down to the well, even with the help of a crutch. But having bathed for about the space of a minute she declared, upon my asking her, *how she found herself*, that she perceived herself in a *glow of heat and very comfortable*.—Upon being dressed she walked with me and my companions home, with the greatest strength and liveliness, having left her crutch behind her, in testimony of her cure. After breakfast she walked with us to Greenfield Abbey, the distance of a mile or more, and back again, and ran down one of the hills, to shew that she was perfectly cured, saying: *You could go faster than me in the morning; but now I can outrun you, or something to that meaning.*

ISABELLA MIDGHALL,
of Gerard-street, Liverpool."

"I, being in company with Mrs. Midghall and my sister-in-law, Elizabeth Bromley, at Holywell, on the 27th of June, found at the house of Mrs. Humphreys, where we lodged, Winefrid White, who had arrived early in the morning of the same day, in a weak and languishing state; being deprived of the use of one side, and her body so bent that her hip stood out the breadth of my hand, as I found by putting my hand, at her desire, upon it. On the following morning I accompanied her to the well, and helped her into it, and dipped her under the water: immediately after which she slipped away from me, in a way which I am convinced she could not have done, if she had not recovered her strength in a surprising manner. I stayed some time afterwards in the well with my sister-in-law; after which, when we were both dressed, I went to the Well-house, where I found Winefrid White making a mark on her crutch; and she afterwards convinced me she was cured by walking and running nimbly in my presence.

MARY BROMLEY,

Sept. 27, 1805.

Tithebarn-street, Liverpool."

"I saw Winefrid White at Mrs. Humphreys' on the evening of June 27, in a weak state, and with all the appearances of great illness, hobbling with her crutch; and afterwards on the morning of the 28th, when she got down, with great difficulty, to the Well. I saw my sister-in-law help her to bathe: soon after which I accompanied her back to Mrs. Humphreys', and afterwards, the same morning, to Greenfield Abbey, when she walked upright and stout. She said she was perfectly cured of all her illness, and I believe she was so.

ELIZ. BROMLEY,
High-street, Liverpool."

Sept. 27, 1805.

Witnesses to the above three testimonies,

Rev. THOMAS FISHER, Edmund-street,
J. SLATER, Steel-street.

In my journey from Liverpool to Holywell I called at Puddington and Chester, where by the testimony of Thomas Weld, Esq. jun. and the Rev. Ralph Platt, of the former place, and of the Rev. Mr. Penswick, of the latter, I found that W. White had been there at the time she reported; that she spent about a fortnight between the two places, and appeared, during the whole of that time, to be in perfect health.

Arriving at Holywell, I found that Mr. Price, of the White Horse Inn there was dead, but having interrogated his widow, who still kept the Inn, concerning certain particulars of W. White's account, she fully confirmed them, as appears by the following testimony, which I took down from her mouth, in the presence of a friend, and which, upon its being read over to her, she signed with her name.

Holywell, Sept. 30, 1805.

"I the undersigned recollect that, about three months ago, a young woman from Wolverhampton, who brought

me a letter from a friend of mine there, came to Holywell from Chester, in one of my returned post-chaises. She was in the most weak and infirm state, and was not able to get up stairs, even by the help of a crutch, without the assistance of my chambermaid. It was on a Thursday morning, and she removed from my house to that of Mrs. Humphreys. On the Friday morning she came to me walking well and upright, and asked me *how I did?* I declared I did not *know her*. She said, she was the *same person who arrived from Wolverhampton the day before*. I asked her *what was become of her crutch?* She said she *left it at the well, and that she was cured of her lameness, and that she had walked that morning to the Abbey and back again*. My astonishment was great at the change that had taken place in her. She afterwards, the same morning, walked about the market, and she drank tea with me on the Saturday evening, and seemed to be in perfect good health.

JANE PRICE."

I next went in search of the house where W. White had lodged in Holywell, and after that went down to the Well-house, at both which places I found other witnesses, besides the persons who kept those houses, ready to confirm her account. In writing down these depositions, from the mouths of those who made them, as was also the case with the aforesaid persons at Liverpool, I kept as close to the terms which the witnesses themselves made use of, as possible, and always distinctly read over to the parties, their respective depositions, before I presented the same to be signed by them. Whenever I found witnesses who had a free use of their pens, I engaged them to draw up their own narrations.

"I Mary Humphreys, of Holywell, remember that a young woman came to my house to lodge on Thursday

June 27th. She appeared to be very languid and weak, and was unable to walk half a yard without a crutch. She was much spent, and begged to lie down on a bed, which she did for the space of two hours. The following day she went down to the Well with Mrs. Midghall and the two Mrs. Bromleys, about seven o'clock. She returned about nine without her crutch, walking upright, and she said she was well and had left her crutch at the Well-house.

MARY HUMPHREYS,
Well Street."

Holywell, Sept. 30, 1805.

"I remember seeing Winefrid White at Mrs. Humphreys', apparently in very weak health, walking very lame, and unable to move without her crutch, on a Thursday, about three months ago. The next day, on the Friday, in the morning, I saw her walking stout and well in the same house, to my great surprise, having recovered her strength, as she said, at the Well in this town.

ROBERT CLUBB."

Holywell, Sep. 30, 1805.

"I, Jane Needham, keeper of the Well-house at Holywell, remember that a young woman, who came in one of Mr. Price's chaises from Chester, about a week before the Midsummer fair*, who came to this Well in a very languid state, and all in a flutter, and to my thinking, helpless on one side. She bathed; after which I saw her walking and running up and down the steps in my house, as it were rejoicing at the recovery of her health. She left her crutch here, with the mark of her name, and seemed perfectly cured.

JANE NEEDHAM."

Well house, Holywell, Sept. 30, 1805.

* This fair is held July the 5th.

" I remember the above particulars.

MARY NEEDHAM."

Holywell, Sept. 30, 1805.

" I remember the same.

JOHN HUGHES."

Holywell, Sept. 30, 1805.

I shall close these Documents with the following certificates, which the Rev. Mr. Wright brought to my inn at Holywell.

" I the undersigned declare that a young woman, stating her name to be Winefrid White, of the town of Wolverhampton, came to me on June 27th, 1805, supporting herself on a crutch; and, on the following day, about ten in the morning, she again presented herself to me perfectly upright, having been released from her infirmity after bathing in St. Winefrid's Well.

EDW. WRIGHT."

Holywell, Sept. 30, 1805.

" I hereby declare, that about three months ago I saw a young woman, calling herself Winefrid White, walking with great difficulty on a crutch, and that on the following morning the said Winefrid White came to me running, without any appearance of lameness, having, as she told me, been immediately cured after once bathing in St. Winefrid's Well.

ELIZ. JONES."

Holywell, Sept. 30, 1805.

From what I learnt at Holywell, I perceived there was a great number of other persons there, ready to declare, upon the testimony of their own senses, the astonishing change that took place in this young woman's health between the morning of the 27th of June, and the noon of

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the next day, consisting of as many persons as had seen her on each of those days. On the other hand, I did not meet with or hear of a single witness to contradict or invalidate the reality of the reported fact. With respect to the people of Wolverhampton, I had before ascertained that there was not an individual acquainted with Mrs. Withenbery's house, who was not willing to depose as to the languid and decrepit state she had been in previously to her journey into Wales, and the healthy vigorous state in which she returned from thence a month afterwards. But I thought it needless to examine any greater number of witnesses, as those who had already testified the reality of the fact, were far more numerous than are required to certify the most important fact in any public court whatsoever.

In other respects, I have to remark that these testimonies are accompanied with all the circumstances which learned writers, and even the most severe critics* in this

* Such I consider Dr. Douglass, Bishop of Salisbury, in his *Criterion of Miracles*; Dr. Cambell, in his *Dissertation on Miracles*; and Dr. Paley, in his *Evidences of Christianity*, vol. i. prop. 2. cap. 1 and 2; all of whom labour hard, but labour in vain, to establish such rules concerning the evidence of miracles, as may admit all those which are recorded in favour of Christianity at large, and may exclude all those that tend to support the Catholic Religion. The first and most celebrated of these critics, Dr. Douglass, lays down the three following axioms: "First," says he, "we suspect the accounts to be false, when they are not published to the world till long after the time when the miracles are said to have been wrought. 2d. We suspect them to be false, when they are not published in the place where it is pretended the facts are wrought. 3d. We suspect them to be false, if in the time when, and at the place where they took their rise, they might be suffered to pass without examination."—*Criterion*, p. 32. Now though these axioms are expressly, but ineffectually, devised to invalidate the testimony of the Holy Fathers concerning the miracles they record, and though, in fact, they furnish arguments to infidels against the scriptural miracles, as the learned Catholic Bishop Dr. Walton shews, in his *Miraculous Powers of the Church asserted*, yet none of them affect the miraculous cure which is the subject of the present work.

matter, require to give credit to them. The witnesses perfectly agree together, as far as they speak to the same points, and where they relate different circumstances, their depositions support each other, as well as the declarations of Winefrid White in general. These witnesses could not have combined together to invent a series of falsehoods, having no common interest or tie to unite them in such a cause, but consisting of persons of different stations, religions, countries and places of residence, viz. Protestants, Catholics, English, Welsh, some residing at Wolverhampton, others at Liverpool, others at Holywell. In a word, the greater part of them at this day are not known to one another.

These witnesses speak of open notorious facts that took place, not at a Catholic oratory or chapel, but at a public bath, and in a Protestant town; of facts that happened, not at a remote period, but within the last four months, being all and every one of them fully sensible that, had they signed their respective names to a falsehood of any kind, (as I informed them that their depositions were to be published) they would remain constantly liable to detection and infamy.

Finally, the witnesses speak of facts, which, however contrary to the established laws of nature, were such as they were competent to judge of, being such as fell immediately under the cognizance of their senses. They saw a person distorted from a curved spine, and half dead from a paralytic side, crawling on a crutch, with every symptom of a most excruciating and desperate malady: and they saw this same person standing erect, walking and running vigorously and nimbly, with all the demonstrations of perfect health, within a short space of time; that is to say, some of them within the course of a month, some within the space of a day, some of two or three hours, and some of as many minutes. On this point the

judgment of the learned comes in to strengthen the experience of the multitude. The two medical gentlemen, who had for years attended this young person, present the most melancholy picture of her case, and declare that it had baffled all their art, and that they considered it as incurable.

I will not here lose time in proving that human testimony is competent to certify the infraction of the laws of nature. None but a Hume, a Rousseau, and others the most desperate infidels or sceptics, have denied this, whose absurdities and contradictions in this matter the apologists of Christianity have invincibly refuted*.

With this body of evidence then before my eyes, what am I to judge? What am I to pronounce? I know, on one hand, that it is a daring insult to the God of truth, to pretend to promote his service by falsehood or deception of any kind; and indeed, neither the general cause of Christianity, nor that of the Holy Catholic Church in particular, needs any such assistance. But I know, on the other hand, that it is a base cowardice and treachery to deny or conceal the manifestations and wonderful works of the Most High, for fear of the censure and ridicule of prophane or unbelieving mortals. Hence I will not hesitate to declare, in the language of the scripture, concerning the wonderful and supernatural cure in question, that *This is the finger of God*, *Exod. viii. 19.* and that even in this age of domineering vice and incredulity, God *hath not left himself without testimony*, *Acts xiv. 16.* or, to speak in plain terms, that an EVIDENT MIRACLE has been wrought amongst us.

But living, as I have intimated, and as it is too evident we do, in an age characterized by nothing so much

* Bergier Encycloped. Cambell Dissert. on Miracles, Houtville Rel Christ. Hay's Scripture Doctrine of Miracles, &c.]

as by its profaneness and unbelief, I am sensible it would be unjustifiable to publish a fact of this nature, without guarding at the same time against the objections and cavils which have been made, or which may be made against it. Again, it would be a culpable neglect, to bring a fact of this nature before the public, without shewing the practical inferences to be drawn from it by upright and well-disposed Christians.

It has been objected then, in the first place, by certain persons in this part of the country, who do not contest the cure itself, that this is to be ascribed to the cold-bath, and it has been said, that *a tub of cold water at Wolverhampton would have produced the same effect*; whereas at Holywell the people in general suppose that their fountain is endowed with a natural salubrious quality, and they alledge that a great number of other persons, besides Winifrid White, have received extraordinary benefit in their health by bathing in it.

I answer: far be it from me to deny the natural efficacy of cold-bathing, and of drinking cold water, either at Holywell* or any where else. But I think I am warranted in maintaining that these, as *natural remedies*, never yet cured a patient in the lamentable situation of this young woman. Thus much I am perfectly sure of, that whatever considerable good effects have ever been produced by these or other natural remedies, have taken place *gradually* and by a *repetition* of them. But here, observe, is the case of a young woman who is restored from the most desperate state of illness to the most perfect state of health in a *minute*, at her *first immersion in the fountain*. At the same time, I am very remote from questioning that other cures as extraordinary as the one in question, have heretofore been performed at Holywell.

* I believe it has been ascertained, by an analysis, that this water contains neither metal nor sulphur, but is the pure element.

On the contrary, I am convinced, not only from authentic records*, but also from the testimony of the subjects of them, or of other living witnesses, that such miraculous cures have actually taken place†.

But then I maintain, that on all such occasions the cures have been sought for and obtained, as on the present occasion, by supernatural means, namely, by prayer, and a strong faith in the omnipotence of God, with hope in the prayers offered up to God by the blessed Virgin Mary and St. Winefrid.

Again, it has been alledged, that at least, enthusiasm, or a strong imagination, may have produced this sudden effect.

My reply is, that those persons who can really imagine this possible, must themselves be possessed of a very strong imagination, or of a spirit of irreligion equally firm. Imagination indeed, or enthusiasm, may produce a certain limited and temporary effect upon the body: but let experienced physicians say, when either of these could effect a perfect cure in any serious inveterate malady, namely, such a one as had been abandoned by eminent persons of their profession as incurable? and when any cure, the effect of imagination, was permanent? If there are persons who seriously believe all this to be possible, I hope, at least, they are not Christians; as, in this supposition, I should wish to be informed by them how they would answer a Deist, who might object that imagination cured a certain other paralytic recorded by St. *Matthew*, chap. xi.

* See in particular the miraculous cure of Sir Roger Boddensham, Knight of the Bath, and head of the ancient and respectable family situate at Rotherwas, near Hereford, mentioned by the learned Alban Butler and F. Molineaux, in their respective accounts of the life of St. Winefrid, to which his and that family's conversion to the catholic faith was owing.

† See what is said below.

6. or that other woman, who was *bowed down with a spirit of infirmity*, and whom the scripture reports to have been cured by Christ? *Luke* xiii. 11.

To proceed with the objections: I expect that the same will be urged on the present occasion, which has been so repeatedly asserted by Protestant controvertists heretofore, namely, that the age of miracles has long since elapsed; and that therefore all accounts of modern miracles must be impositions, or at least falsehoods.

This is indeed a commodious mode of getting rid of positive facts by the help of arbitrary systems. I grant these controvertists are so far agreed, as not to admit of the existence of any miraculous event for a great many ages past, and they make no secret of their motive for not admitting them: for they acknowledge they cannot admit of any miracles, without subscribing to those religious doctrines and practices, by means or in favour of which they have been wrought. Hence they say, they should be obliged to confess the lawfulness of prayers to the saints, veneration for their relics, the sign of the cross, purgatory, the real presence, &c.* Thus they judge of facts by opinions, and not of opinions by facts; contrary to the whole system of the gospel. In the mean time, the embarrassments and contradictions they fall into in settling the period for the cessation of miracles, betrays their want of evidence and candour in the business. Luther, who wrote without reflection or system, acknowledges that miracles at the sepulchres of the saints sometimes took place in his time†. Fox‡ and Godwin§ admit those recorded by Ve-

* "By granting the Romanists but a single age of miracles after the time of the apostles, we shall be entangled in a series of difficulties, whence we can never fairly extricate ourselves, till we allow the same powers also to the present age." Dr. Middleton's *Free Inquiry*, p. 65.

† In *Purgat. quorundam Artic.*

‡ *Acts et Monum.*

§ *Catalogue of Bishops.*

nerable Bede, St. Gregory, and our apostle St. Augustine at the beginning of the 7th century. Tillotson, Mosheim, Dodwell, &c. allow of the miraculous powers of the Church within the first three ages. But the famous Dr. Middleton*, whose opinion seems now to be generally followed, admits of no miracles since the time of the apostles themselves: bringing a universal charge of falsehood and forgery against all the holy fathers and doctors of the Church, and against all the ecclesiastical historians and writers of all past ages. That is to say, he accuses a vast proportion of the most virtuous and holy, as well as the most enlightened men who ever lived in the world, of one of the foulest crimes human nature is capable of. But who does not see that an imputation of this nature tends to invalidate the credibility of human testimony, and the authenticity of the gospel itself, by undermining the moral character of those who were its guardians? Who does not perceive that such a charge goes to establish a general historical scepticism? In the mean time, it is proper to inform persons of upright and candid minds, in the words of Dr. Middleton himself, that “the claim of miraculous powers was universally asserted and believed in all christian countries, and in all ages of the Church, till the time of the Reformation;” (he should have said, with respect to Christians at large, *down to the present time* :) “for ecclesiastical history makes no difference between one age and another, but carries on the succession of its miracles, as of all other common events, through all of them indifferently†.” I will here just glance at a few authorities drawn from different periods, for asserting the continuation of miracles in the Catholic Church.

In the first age, when St. Ignatius, a disciple of the apostles, speaks of it as a very frequent occurrence, that

* Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, &c. by Conyers Middleton, D. D.

† Ibid. p. 32.

the wild beasts by which the Christians were condemned to be devoured, grew tame at their feet, and were *afraid to touch them*. This he prays may not be the case with him*. St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, in the second century, who had been educated by the disciples of the Apostles, writing against the heretics of his time, appeals to the miracles, even such as raising the dead to life, which, he says, sometimes took place, through fervent prayer, in the bosom of the Catholic Church: whereas the heretics, against whom he writes, did not so much as pretend to any such sanction†. The holy martyr, St. Cyprian, in the third age, relates several miracles that happened under his own eye ‡. In the fourth century happened that astonishing and incontestable miracle, attested by the pagan writers as well as by the holy fathers of that age, when the Emperor Julian the Apostate, attempting to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, in order to disprove the prophecy of Daniel: "Frightful balls of fire frequently burst forth near the foundations, and, having several times burnt the workmen, rendered the place inaccessible. So the enterprise was given over, by reason of the elements fighting against it with determined obstinacy§." At the latter end of the same century, St. Ambrose speaking of the public and uncontroverted miracles that were wrought in his presence, and that of the whole city of Milan, on the discovery of the relics of SS. Gervasius and Protatius, describes the jealousy of the Arian heretics, because no such ce-

* Ignat. Ep. ad Roman.

† Iren. contra Her. l. xi. c. 31.

‡ Serm. de Lapsis.

§ These are the very words of the Pagan Historian Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxiii. Julian himself, in one of his letters, acknowledges the fact. I omit the testimonies of all the cotemporary Fathers. Dr. Warburton has defended this splendid miracle in his work entitled Julian, page 15.

lestial favours were known among them.* In the fifth age, the illustrious St. Augustine of Hippo, fills whole pages of his renowned work, *De Civitate Dei*, with accounts of the miracles that had a little before either taken place in his presence, or were publicly wrought in his neighbourhood, at the oratories of the proto-martyr St. Stephen†. In the sixth century, St. Nicetas, Bishop of Treves, writing to Queen Clodosind, advises her to call the attention of her Arian husband, Alboin, King of the Lombards, to the frequent miracles wrought at the tombs of St. Martin, St. Hilarius, &c. whilst no prodigies of the sort, says the saint, are to be heard of in his sect‡. This fact, in both its parts, was acknowledged about the same time, by Leovigild, King of the Visigoths, and it actually caused the conversion of his son Recared to the catholic faith§. In the seventh century, our Saxon ancestors were converted to Christianity by missionaries sent from Rome; on which occasion such numerous and splendid miracles were wrought by St. Augustine and his companions, that St. Gregory the Great wrote to announce the same to the Patriarch of the East, and sent another letter to St. Augustine himself, in order to guard him against pride or vanity on this account ||.

The chain of miracles is uninterrupted down to the present time; but it is too long to be here even indistinctly traced. If any candid Protestant will be at the trouble of examining the process of the canonization of Saints, namely, that public act by which their sanctity, as attested both by incontestable miracles and eminent virtues, is proclaimed to the Church, and will there attend to the severe and jealous scrutiny which all such prodigies under-

* See Fleury's Eccl. Hist. l. xviii. sec. 47, p. 15.

† L. xxii.

‡ Labbe's Concil. tom. 5.

§ Greg. Turon.

|| Bede l. 1. c. 31. S. Greg. Ep. 58:

go, and the clear, notorious, unequivocal proofs that are required to verify them, I am convinced such candid Protestant will be both surprised and satisfied*. To speak of our own country, though the present supernatural cure is perhaps the only one, which, during a very long period, has been regularly proved or even laid before the public, yet it is well known, amongst Catholics, that such events are by no means unfrequent. I myself know two or three different persons who, I am fully satisfied, have been the subjects of them. One of these, a woman of strict conscience, now living at Preston, has assured me, [and I am convinced that, in the circumstances in which she spoke to me, she would not intentionally have deceived me] that she herself was cured, by once bathing at Holywell seve-

* See an account of this process in Dr. Hay's work on Miracles, and elsewhere. It is perhaps one of the most rigid and scrupulous kind of scrutiny that exists in Christendom. In this the arguments and objections of the most eminent physicians, as well as those of the most ingenuous logicians, are sought for and nicely weighed at different intervals with respect to each of the alledged facts. The whole subject is well worthy the attention of the ingenious and learned, as well as of the pious and devout. It is proper to add that, whereas any man is here at liberty to utter or publish whatever fictions he pleases; it is not so at Rome. Any deliberate attempt to impose upon the public in this manner, would subject the author of it to severe punishment from the civil as well as the ecclesiastical tribunal. In a word, such is the rigour and scrupulosity of the Congregation of Rites, consisting of Cardinals and other eminent divines, to which the examination of reported miracles is committed, that, says the learned Collet, of forty which are attested and laid before them perhaps not one is admitted as being sufficiently proved and evident in all its parts. It is well known that an English Protestant Gentleman being at Rome, and meeting with the process of several miracles that had been recently adduced for the beatification of a certain saint, he exclaimed: *It were well if the See of Rome admitted of no miracles, but such as are as well authenticated as these are*: when lo! he was informed, to his astonishment, that every one of these had been rejected by the Congregation of Rites, as not being sufficiently proved.

ral years ago, of a cancer in her breast, which had three open wounds. She describes another person, a Presbyterian man, as having been cured at the same time and place, of a much more dreadful malady, and who was converted to the Catholic faith by the miracle. Again, I know a family in which five or six persons of the strictest honour and conscience are ready to depose the following particulars, as having been actual witnesses to them. One of this family, a maid-servant, having slipped down a flight of stone steps dislocated her heel so dreadfully that the surgeon who attended her, declared it would have been better for her to have broken her leg in several places. He, of course, endeavoured to reduce the dislocation, and afforded her whatever relief was in his power, during an attendance of several days, but as the patient thought to very little effect: and indeed he gave her very slender hopes of making a perfect cure. In this situation, having consulted with her friends and superiors, she entered upon a course of devotions, which she made a vow of continuing till the end of her life, if it pleased Almighty God to restore her to the perfect use of her limb: when, behold, as she affirmed, the very next night after making the vow, she was favoured with a kind of apparition, which approaching her bed, seemed in an instant to effect that reduction of the joint which the surgeon had been unable to do, and to work an entire cure, without the least remaining pain or weakness. Such was the account of the patient herself; but thus much I am assured of, by the aforesaid half dozen creditable and respectable witnesses, that they left her the night before, lying on her bed in such an agony of pain, that she could not bear a person to walk across the room, or so much as a sheet to touch her foot, which was swollen, inflamed, and discoloured to a great degree; and that they found her, to their astonishment, the next morning, walking firmly and standing singly on the foot that had been dislocated;

which, upon examlning it, they saw was free from all the above-mentioned symptoms, with barely a small streak round it, as a memorial of the miracle that had taken place in it. As, however, I do not now produce my vouchers for these latter prodigies, I am contented not to be credited for them on my single word by those who are not acquainted with me. Still, I have thought it proper to mention them, for the purpose of informing persons who may never have heard of modern miracles, that we Catholics believe such events to happen from time to time, and, of course, that the present prodigy, in our opinion, does not stand alone.

By way of ending this matter I should be glad to ask those persons, who so resolutely maintain that miracles have long since ceased, upon what foundation they rest their assertion. Is it upon the evidence of facts as recorded in ecclesiastical history? But the whole current of this, as I have shewn, and as Dr. Middleton has acknowledged above, flows uniformly against them. Is it upon the analogy, that is to say, upon the example of God's dealing with his people heretofore, as recorded in the Bible? But wherever I open it, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Maccabees, I find a continued series of miracles. Is it from the condition of Christ's followers under the law of grace, as predicted and appointed by him in the gospel? Now, so far from his saying that there should be an end of miracles in the Christian Church, he promises absolutely, and without limitation of time or place: *These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues, &c. they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.* Mark xvi. 17, 18. And elsewhere he thus promises: *He that believeth in me, the works that I do, he shall do also, and greater works than these shall he do.* St. John xiv. 2.

It is however alledged by the advocates of this system, that they are not totally without ground for it: as they assert that the occasion and end of miracles have ceased since the promulgation of the gospel.

I reply that, according to the drift of this very argument, the continuation of miracles has ever been necessary in the Christian Church, because the gospel has in every age been preached and propagated amongst certain infidel nations by her missionaries, such as a St. Augustine, the Apostle of England, a St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the East, who, in fact, are proved to have wrought the most astonishing prodigies*. But by what authority, I ask, do these reasoners limit the power of the Almighty, in the performance of his prodigies, to the conversion of infidels? So far from this being true, he will, if he pleases, raise a dead body to life, at the contact of a holy prophet's relics, to shew the veneration that is due to them †. He will, if he pleases, cause a gourd suddenly to spring up in order to shelter another prophet, who complains of the heat of the sun ‡. Or he will, if it pleaseth him, cause iron to swim on the surface of the water, in order to enable a poor, but pious man, to restore the axe which he has borrowed §.

But it will be felt by some persons, and urged by others, that if the present miracle, which was avowedly petitioned for of Almighty God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of St. Winefrid, be admitted, it will follow, that prayers to the Saints, and a veneration

* These miracles, even to the raising the dead to life, were proved upon the oaths of a great number of eye-witnesses, by a commission from the King of Portugal to enquire into them, dated April 1556.

† See ii. alias iv. Kings xiii. 21.

‡ Jonah iv. 6.

§ ii. alias iv. Kings vi. 5.

for their relics, and other things appertaining to them, are devoid of superstition, and even actually pleasing to the Almighty.

Thus argues Dr. Middleton, and the great body of modern controvertists who follow him, with respect to the generality of the miracles recorded by the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, from the age of the Apostles down to the present times. For the aforesaid Doctor complains, and that very truly, as we have intimated before, that most of these prodigies were wrought by, or some how or another are connected with what are commonly called Popish superstitions, such as the sign of the cross, prayers to the saints, a veneration for their relics and pictures, prayers for the dead, the real presence, the sacrifice of the mass, &c. Wherefore, says he; "If we admit the miracles, we must admit the rites for the sake of which they were wrought; both resting on the same bottom *." Hence, instead of supposing that he may have been mistaken in the prejudices he has formed against these rites of the Universal Church, he chooses rather, as I have said before, to give up the moral characters of an Ignatius, a Polycarp, an Irenæus, a Justin, a Tertullian, an Origen, a Cyprian, a Basil, a Chrysostom, an Ambrose, an Augustine, with a hundred more who were either disciples of the Apostles, or Martyrs or Doctors, or Apologists of Christianity, or Church Historians, &c.; that is to say, he scruples not to pronounce the most venerable personages the world ever knew, next to those who were inspired, the teachers and representatives of the Church of Christ, and the very guardians of his gospels, as a collection of unprincipled impostors, who, age after age, conspired to palm upon their contemporaries and future ages, a series of pretended facts, which

* Inquiry Introduct. Disc. p. 66.

"they themselves had forged, or knew to have been forged *." Thus to indulge a favourite prejudice, he and those who argue with him, shut their eyes against the noontide light of heaven, and their ears against the voice of Eternal Truth itself, attesting the piety and acceptableness of the Catholic doctrines and rites. In like manner the Pharisees denied the notorious incontestable fact of the blind man having been restored to sight by our Saviour, in the face of innumerable witnesses, and of the man himself, because they could not acknowledge this prodigy, without abandoning their preconceived resolution of not receiving Jesus as the great Messiah †.

Lastly, there are not wanting those who scruple not to turn the acknowledged criterion of truth into a mark of falsehood, and the sanction of the Almighty into an attribute of Antichrist ‡. These writers are so profane as to assert, that the miracles wrought in the Catholic Church are a proof that she belongs to that *man of sin, the son of perdition whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all powers, and signs, and lying wonders.* 2 Thess. ii. 9. §

* Ibid. p. 57.

† St. John, c. 9.

‡ See Benson's Essay on the Man of Sin, in the Collection of Theological Tracts, by R. Watson, D. D. Bishop of Landaff, vol. v. Also Kett's History, the Interpreter of Prophecy, vol. ii. p. 22, &c.

§ The last mentioned writer, Kett, endeavouring to draw a parallel between Antichrist, as described in the scripture, and the Pope, represents the latter as pretending to make "fire come down from heaven, as in the case of St. Antony's fire, &c." This passage, I am sure, will puzzle all Catholics, and would puzzle the Pope himself, if he were to meet with it, to guess at its meaning. It is true that the Monks of St. Antony, or the Hospital Monks, were accustomed heretofore to cure an inflammatory disorder called the Erysipellas, once very common in Italy, with hog's lard, &c. (whence their pigs were allowed to graze free, and their patron Saint himself was painted with a pig, and whence also the disorder itself was called *St. Antony's fire*),

I grant, that as the Magicians of Pharaoh were permitted to produce certain extraordinary effects, so we gather from the present text, that Antichrist will be permitted to exercise a similar power. But we learn also from it, that this power will not exceed the *working of Satan*, which is expressly limited to the productions of *signs and lying wonders*, that is to say of false miracles. In a word, it is agreed upon amongst all the learned advocates of Revelation *, that as miracles are by their own nature, and the express declaration of Christ †, the test of truth, and the voice of the Almighty, so the latter will never permit any real or apparently supernatural effect to be wrought by Satan or his agents, in behalf of religious falsehood, without at least causing some incontestable miracle of a more striking nature to be performed in defence of the truth. In fact every one knows that this happened in the contest between the above mentioned Magicians, on one side, and Moses and Aaron, on the other. This being plainly and avowedly the case, it is for those who ascribe the prodigies that take place in the bosom of the Catholic Church, to the power of Satan, (like the Jews of old, who said of Christ; *In Beelzebub, the chief of the devils, he casteth out devils*, Luke xi. 16.) it is for them, I

but neither they, nor any other Catholics, ever pretended or wished to call down any other kind of fire upon earth, except that which Christ says, he came to cast upon it, Luke xii. 40.

* Grotius De Verit. Abbadie, Honteville, Clarke, Nat. and Rev. Rel. The latter says, that if God were to permit such false miracles without detection, he would be the author of error. This is also conformable to the common sentiments of mankind. When the Dutch preachers endeavoured to withdraw an Indian tribe, situated near Cape Comorin, from the faith taught them by St. Francis Xavier, they answered: *Our good father raised six dead persons to life amongst us. Do you raise twelve, and we will be of your religion.* Bercastel, Hist. de l'Eglise, tom. 23.

† St. John x. 37, 38.

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say, to confront these with other more astonishing prodigies, performed in opposition to them by other sectaries. But where are these to be found? The Arians and heretics of old, as appears from what has been said above, made no pretensions to any thing of this nature. Sir John Oldcastle indeed, the ostensible head of the Wickliffites, promised to rise from the dead on the third day after his execution*. But the event did not answer his prediction. As to Luther and his companions, though they required the test of miracles from their dissenting brethren the Anabaptists†, yet they themselves, as Erasmus reproached them, were never able to cure so much as a lame horse. And with respect to the French Protestants, though they pretended, about a hundred years ago, both in Languedoc and this country, to the gift of prophesy and miracles, yet their pretensions were so absurd and ill supported by facts, that their best friends wish to throw a veil over them‡.

But on such a subject as the one here announced I am sensible that objections or cavils will be raised without number. To announce a miracle in these days of infidelity, or rather Saducism, must subject the person who announces it to the censure of many, and the ridicule of more. I reflect, however, that the very miracles recorded in the gospel were subject to the same ordeal. The Pharisees and Saducees would not admit of the miracles performed before their faces on the earth, but required of Christ that he should *shew them a sign from heaven*, St. Matt. xvi. 1. The people of Nazareth would not be satisfied with the evidence of the miracles which Jesus had

* Walsingham's Hist. Angl. apud Camden's Scrip. Angl.

† Sleidan Hist. L. v.

‡ Paley's Evidences, vol. 1. p. 354. Cambell's Dissert. p. 124. See also History of Camissards.

wrought in the neighbouring country of Capharnaum, but insisted on his repeating the same in that *his own country*, St. Luke iv. 23. The supercilious Herod would not trust to the account which his subjects gave him of our Saviour's wonderful works, but commanded him to perform one of them in his presence; and when this condition was not complied with, he and his courtiers *mocked* our Divine Master, as an impostor, and clothed him in the ordinary garb of an idiot. St. Luke xxiii. 11. Such is the obstinacy of the human mind in shutting out evidence of a disagreeable nature! In fact, Christ himself has assured us, there are those who *would not believe although one rose from the dead to preach to them*. St. Luke xvi. 31.

Still it may be hoped, that this miraculous cure, by being more generally known, will produce those good effects upon a certain number of sincere and humble souls, which it has already produced upon some, and which it was certainly designed by Almighty God to produce, independently of the immediate benefit of the subject of it. For every known miracle is the voice of God proclaiming to men his infinite power, goodness, and providence in their regard. It calls therefore for a renewal of our profound homage, of our ardent love, and of our entire confidence in him, under all the accidents and sufferings that we do or may experience. Every miracle is moreover a divine sanction of the religious worship or devout practices, for the sake of which, or by means of which, such supernatural communication with man has taken place. Hence the present miraculous cure, obtained of Almighty God by the prayers of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Winefrid, who had been invoked for this purpose, at a place particularly consecrated to the memory of the latter more than a thousand years ago*, ought to confirm us in our faith, and

* To argue why supernatural cures or other benefits should be granted at certain places, or by means of certain exterior rites or things,

particularly in that article of it which declares, that "the Saints reigning with Christ offer up their prayers for mankind*. It ought to excite our fervour in begging the aid of their intercession with our common Lord; be-

is to dispute with the Almighty himself, who has decreed that it shall frequently be so. When Naaman the leper, was ordered by the prophet to wash in the Jordan, he indignantly answered: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean," ii. al. iv. Kings v. 12. But the fact is, God had endowed the waters of Jordan alone with the virtue of cleansing him. In like manner it was to the pool of Siloam, exclusively of all others, that the man born blind was sent by Christ to recover his sight, St. John ix. 7.; and it was the pool of Bethesda, solely, that possessed the property of curing the first sick person who went into it at a certain season, St. John v. 4. I have already mentioned the miracle performed on a dead body by the relics of the prophet Elisha or Eliseas, and I might mention those wrought by means of the handkerchiefs and aprons that had but touched the body of St. Paul, Acts xix. 12.

* Concil. Trid. Sess. xxv. De Invoc.—As we have endeavoured above to confute the principal objections of the incredulous, so it seems proper here to answer one query of the pious. They ask why all the patients who frequent this fountain with apparent good dispositions are not equally relieved from their infirmities?—To this I reply, in the words of our Saviour, when the people of Nazareth reproached him with the paucity of the miracles he performed there, compared with those which he wrought at Capharnaum: "There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel, in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." Luke iv. 25, 26, 27. God is the master of his own works, and it is impossible for us poor mortals to enter into the counsels of his wisdom and providence; but, in general, it seems that he is pleased to endow those whom he selects for the display of these his supernatural operations with a lively faith and a firm confidence in his power, goodness and mercy, together with a peculiar presentiment that he will exert the same in their regard.

ing assured that these our brethren and fellow-citizens have not lost either the will or the power to assist us, by entering into the regions of eternal charity, and by becoming the courtiers of the great King, but that, as a holy Father assures us: "Whilst they are secure of their own happiness, they are solicitous about ours*."

✝ JOHN MILNER.

Wolterhampton, October 29, 1805.

* S. Cyp. de Mortalit.

POSTSCRIPT.

I cannot conclude this little work without making three short observations. In the first place, I beg it to be understood, that the belief and practices, which I say are sanctioned by miracles, are not such as they are grossly conceived to be, and misrepresented by our misguided brethren; but such as they are taught and used by the Catholic Church itself*. Secondly, I say that the Protestant controvertists mistake the case when they speak of Catholics *claiming miraculous powers*. We do not *claim* them as a power inherent in any part of our church: we

* See these explained in detail by the learned Dr. Challoner, in his *Catholic Christian Instructed*, or in Dr. Hay's *Sincere Christian*.

barely alledge that *God is pleased from time to time to manifest supernatural effects in our communion*, and that exclusively in our communion. Lastly, it is to be observed, that we do not rest our defence of those doctrines and practices, on which our brethren have broken communion with us, exclusively on the miracles by which God sanctions them, any more than they rest the proof of Christianity on the scriptural miracles alone. We cannot but avail ourselves of such evidence; but we have abundance of other proofs in favour of those articles from Scripture, Tradition, the Holy Fathers, and human-reason.—I cannot but add, that in maintaining the continuation of miracles in the Catholic Church, I am far from defending a great proportion of the accounts of this nature, which have been reported by ignorant persons, or are contained in unauthentic legends. I make a certain allowance for imposture, and a much greater for credulity. Still I assert, that a considerable number of miraculous events are proved to have taken place in different ages of the Church, upon such evidence that they cannot be controverted without introducing absolute scepticism. Such, amongst others, was the miracle wrought upon Ann Charlier, during the procession of Corpus Christi at Paris, in the year 1725, and juridically proved by the Archbishop of that see*.

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